

A veteran Southfield police officer was found guilty Thursday of torching his car along Interstate 75 last summer in an apparent desperate attempt to avoid paying mounting fees on his auto lease for excessive mileage.

So now, instead of paying thousands of dollars in unanticipated miles, Joseph Glenn Bucuren Jr., 51, of Waterford Township, could find himself in prison for up to five years.

Bucuren was arrested about 3 a.m. on August 5, 2006, after deputies, who responded to a car fire along I-75 and Dixie Highway near Clarkston, found him crawling in tall grass along the embankment as his 2004 Chevrolet Impala burned nearby.

"His inconsistent accounts of what occurred and versions he gave officers and most of all, the physical evidence, just didn't add up," said Oakland County Assistant Prosecutor Terri Antisdale, funded by the ATPA.

Circuit Judge Rudy J. Nichols apparently agreed, finding Bucuren guilty immediately after the one-day bench trial. Nichols allowed Bucuren to remain free on bond pending his sentencing on Aug. 31.

Bucuren spent 19 years on the Southfield Police Department and was just six weeks shy of full retirement when the incident occurred, Antisdale said.